



Bible Student's Notebook™

The Herald of His Grace

Presenting every man perfect in Christ Jesus. Colossians 1:28

Volume 36
Issue 882

Our Calling in Him: Brief Studies in Ephesians 1:3-2:7

Part 2 of 5

by — Vincent Bennett

THE PLAN AND THE WORK OF GOD

Ephesians 1:3-14

Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ (:3).

There is much eulogizing of men that is empty and meaningless. But as we contemplate the wonders of God's redeeming grace, surely this exultant outburst of praise should come from overflowing hearts and be on the lips of all of the redeemed, especially those who, by the illumination of the Spirit of God, have come to a more intimate realization of their calling and hope.

Notice that it is not "the God of Abraham, and of Isaac and of Jacob, the God of our fathers" (Acts 3:13). There is a vast difference between truth linked up with the "God of our fathers" and the "God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ," for this is not a covenant relationship such as He bears with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob for Israel's national blessing on the Earth; but here the risen Savior is given His full title and He is called "OUR" Lord Jesus Christ, and in Him, the God and Father hath blessed "US."

Take note of these pronouns, for to know the meaning of these little words is to understand much of the interpretation of the epistle, and the "OUR" and "US" in this passage has reference to the Jew and Gentile as they are united in One Body in Christ, for this is the theme of the Ephesian letter.



Who hath blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Heavenly places (:3).

Oh, how distinct is our calling in Christ from that of Israel. Israel indeed has a glorious expectation, a hope that will be realized in a material way upon the Earth when "the times of refreshing" shall be ushered in, when the spirit shall be poured upon all flesh, when Messiah the King shall reign in righteousness.

Israel then has material blessings related to the Earth, but the Church which is His body has spiritual blessings related to the heavenlies. We have no prophetic forecast such as is given to Israel, and our affections are not to be centered on the Earth but in the heavenlies, where Christ is, Who is our life, for this is where our hope is actually going to be realized – "in Glory." The term "in heavenly places," literally "in the heavenlies," occurs five times (Ephesians 1:3, 20; 2:6; 3:10; 6:12) and has definite reference to a locality. Christ is there – our citizenship is there – for our standing by grace is "in Christ." So already, positionally, I am "in the heavenlies in Christ," and the same power that brought again the Lord Jesus from the dead and carried Him through the heavens to that blest abode, will one day bring the members of "His Body" to "The Head" in Glory.

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When the hope of Israel is realized in the land of promise, surely the people will be able to say, blessed be God who hath blessed us with all “earthly” blessings; and when members of the Church which is His Body once realize the character and sphere of their own blessings in contrast, they will not want to go around robbing Israel of her glory.

Ours are not blessings that are conditioned and restricted, depending upon our works of righteousness or faithfulness, but blessings secured for us by the faithfulness of Jesus Christ in Whom we have all things. Here is just a glimpse of the fulness of the grace of our God.

In Christ (:3).

This is the sum of it all in two words: “*In Christ.*” In Him we have the explanation of all that we are in the sight of God and all that we hope to be in the ages to come; for by identification with Christ we are “*accepted*” by the Father and all spiritual blessings are ours.

“*In Christ*” explains our transition by faith from death to life. We died in Him, we were buried and

rose in Him, we ascended in Him, and when He appears, transformed in His likeness we shall appear with Him in His glory.

When the tabernacle was still standing the high priest entered the Holy of Holies as the representative of the people, bearing upon his person the breastplate with its twelve precious stones on which were engraved the names of the Twelve Tribes of Israel, thus carrying them into the presence of God. “*In Christ*” we are not only “presented” but veritably “present,” for He has “*made us sit together in the heavenlies in Christ.*”

THE PLAN AND THE WORK OF GOD

Ephesians 1:3-14

The Father’s Choice

Ephesians 1:4

According as He hath chosen us in Him before the overthrow of the world.

The Father’s choice of us “*in Christ*” is seen to be according to a preconceived plan which He purposed in His own infinite wisdom “*before the overthrow of*

Bible Student’s Notebook™

Paul Our Guide – Christ Our Goal

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Scripture education in a weekly format!

This free electronic publication is dedicated to:

- the absolute sovereignty and deity of God (Romans 11:36);
- the proclamation of the riches of God’s abundant, exceeding grace (Romans 5:20; 11:6; Ephesians 1:7);
- the affirmation that God will save all through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ (I Timothy 2:3, 4; 4:10; Titus 2:11);
- the “*preaching of Jesus Christ, according to the revelation of the mystery, which was kept secret in ages past*” (Romans 16:25);
- true freedom and liberty apart from law (Galatians 5:1);
- the organic nature of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:16);
- the Secret Administration, being the operational revelation for today (Ephesians 3:9);
- the unprophesied, Celestial hope and calling of the Body of Christ (Colossians 3:4);
- the distinct message and ministry of Paul, the apostle to the nations (Ephesians 3:1-3);
- the importance of receiving all whom Christ has received (Romans 14-15);
- the recovery of rich Biblical truth that has too long remained hidden under the veils of traditionalism, prejudice, misunderstanding and fear (Mark 7:7, 13);
- the completeness of the believer in Christ (Colossians 2:10), with:
 - total freedom from sins (Colossians 1:14);
 - union in His death, burial and resurrection and ascended seated position among the celestials (Romans 6; Ephesians 2:6);

– adult sonship position (Ephesians 1:5).

This publication is the product of humble efforts of ordinary men intended to stimulate the earnest study of Scripture. We do not claim infallibility for the contents of this publication; thus they are not meant to imply finality on any subject discussed, or that further research would not add further light from the Word of God. God’s storehouse of truth is inexhaustible, so draw on its wealth by prayerful study. Our readers are asked to be as the Bereans and search the Scriptures (Acts 17:10-11; I Thessalonians 5:21).

This publication is not connected with any “church,” “denomination,” “movement,” “organization,” “mission,” “creed,” “meeting,” “school,” “conference” or “fellowship.”

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For definitions of abbreviations/acronyms, see index after the [order form](#).

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the world.” The whole plan of redemption, and the calling of the Church with all of its details, was on the heart of God before sin even entered the picture.

Nor was the calling of the Church an afterthought on the heart of God, when Israel had failed to realize her purpose and the judicial sentence of blindness was passed upon her. Before man was created, God had already planned the calling of the Church; but He kept it a secret, “*hid from generations*” until He was ready for the working out of His purpose, at which time the revelation of it was made known to the apostle Paul. Should we want to know when the Church began or where it originated, one answer is plain: in the heart of God “*before the overthrow of the world.*”

Now notice the choice of God’s earthly people the Jews.

Now the Lord had said unto Abram, “Get thee out of thy country, and from thy kindred, and from thy father’s house, unto a land that I will shew thee: And I will make of thee a great nation, and will bless thee, and make thy name great; and thou shalt be a blessing: And I will bless them that bless thee, and curse him that curseth thee, and in thee shall all families of the earth be blessed” (Genesis 12:1-3).

Thus, the history of this one nation is clearly marked in the Word of God. Then we see God making choice of one tribe within the nation, that of “*Judah*”; then one house within the tribe, “*the House of David*”; then one particular virgin within the house, “*Mary*”; and in the fulness of time Jesus came, born of a woman to redeem Israel, and although the Jews would not have this King to reign over them when He came the

first time, yet, “*when the Son of Man shall come in His glory*” in His second advent, the purpose of God’s choice and calling of Israel will be realized.

*Then shall the King say unto them on His right hand, “Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you, **from the overthrow of the world**” (Matthew 25:34).*

Surely the words “*before the overthrow of the world*” and “*from the overthrow of the world*” must be distinguished if confusion of truth is to be avoided. Our own relationship with Jesus Christ originated in the heart of God *prior* to the overthrow of the world, and it must not be made identical with any Jewish hope or promise spoken of as being made *since* the overthrow of the world. According to God’s purpose of the ages, the members of the Body of Christ are not *historic*, but *prehistoric* specimens of grace.

The glory and wonder of the Father’s choice is made more precious in the light of other facts that obtained *before the overthrow of the world.*

First, in John 17:24, we find this blessed statement in the prayer of Jesus Christ:

*Thou lovest Me **before** the overthrow of the world.*

And now with Ephesians 1:4 before us, we can truthfully say that not only was the love of the Father for the Son *prior* to the overthrow, but *we also* were loved and chosen “*in Christ*” there.

Second, in I Peter 1:19-20, the sacrificial death of Je-



70 pp., PB

The Doctrine of Substitution: An Erroneous Teaching

A Compilation

This is an exposé of Christianity’s erroneous doctrine of “Substitution.” Though it is widely accepted, it is not the teaching of Scripture. This is a compilation of authors, including: *A.P. Adams, Vladimir Gelesnoff, Andrew J. Jukes, A.E. Knoch.*

See [order form](#) under “Compilations.” “The best book I’ve read in ten years.” – Richard Kirsch

✚ sus Christ is said to have been “foreordained before the overthrow of the world.” Therefore, we can say that we were chosen and loved with the foreordination of the sacrifice.

These statements are profound and beyond human comprehension leaving us lost in wonder and awe, so that with a deep sense of reverence we bow before the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the Apostle Paul cry,

Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments, and His ways past finding out!

THE PLAN AND THE WORK OF GOD

Ephesians 1:3-14

The Father’s Purpose

Ephesians 1:4

That we should be holy and, without blame before Him in love.

Only “in Christ” can we ever stand thus before the Father, for only Christ Jesus has met every demand of God’s righteousness and holiness. What we are, we are by Divine mercy and grace, that has been so freely given us through the death of His Son.

In Colossians 1:21-22 we have been reconciled to God in the death of Jesus Christ that we might be “holy and unblameable and unproveable in His sight.”

Here is the revelation of our STANDING “before Him,” “in His sight,” because of our being “in Christ.” This places the emphasis not on our earthly condition, but on our heavenly position. In Ephesians 5:27, we have the words,

That He might present it to Himself a glorious Church, not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish.

This certainly is not descriptive of the Church’s purity realized in an earthly pilgrimage, but rather a presentation before the Father because of a heavenly standing in Christ.

God was “in Christ” with a standing before men, and so now “in Christ” we have a standing before God in His exaltation, holiness and righteousness. We see God in Christ and God sees us in Christ, thus in Christ we have a perfect standing before the Father, and Colossians 2:10 is a blessed fact, we are complete “in Him.”

THE PLAN AND THE WORK OF GOD

Ephesians 1:3-14

The Father’s Motive

Ephesians 1:4

In Love

Some commentators feel that these two words should be linked with Ephesians 1:4 as in the authorized version, others connect them with Ephesians 1:5, reading thus, “In love having predestinated us,” etc. These words belong to both verses and cannot be separated from either.

It was love that motivated the Father’s heart to make such choice of us in His Son. It was love we did not deserve and upon which we had no claim, love that has broken down all barriers of distinction, and come to aliens, far off; love that is not to be reckoned according to human concepts and cannot be fathomed by any reasoning process of man. The word here used for “love” is *agapē* and never occurs in other Greek writings, other words of lower standards being used outside of Scripture. Now, God gives a new word for “love,” for the language of man could never adequately express the true feeling of God’s heart. We understand something of the meaning of love only as it is shed abroad in our hearts by God’s spirit (Romans 5:5).

No wonder that the apostle speaks of God’s “great love wherewith He loved us” (Ephesians 2:4) and prays that we might be “rooted and grounded in love” (3:17), beseeching us that we “forbear one another in love” (4:2). He implores also that the precious truths that we hold be not spoken in a manner that might detract from the glory of the message, but, “speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things” (:15), and thus members of the Body can be “edified in love” (:16).

THE PLAN AND THE WORK OF GOD

Ephesians 1:3-14

The Father's Will

Ephesians 1:5

In love having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to Himself, according to the good pleasure of His will.

According to His own sovereign will, in love, God has predestinated, or foreordained us to the *Son-Position*. The word "adoption" does not bring out the clear teaching of this passage. Believers in Christ Jesus are made new creatures in Christ and given *the position of sons*. Literally speaking, we are given the *Son-Place*. Just as Jesus Christ is the Son of God, we who are "in Christ" are given the "Son-Place," and become the sons of God by grace.

Notice that all of this is according to the good pleasure of His will. His will is the origin and secret of it all, and all blessings in the past, present or future, realized or anticipated, are the wondrous manifestations of His love according to the good pleasure of His will.

THE PLAN AND THE WORK OF GOD

Ephesians 1:3-14

The Father's Object

Ephesians 1:6

To the praise of the glory of His grace.

This is the end to which the Father made choice of us, to set forth "the glory of His grace." Let our hearts be filled with adoration and praise. Surely every attribute of God is a revelation of His glory, but the glory of His grace is the most glorious in revelation and manifestation, for it shines in all of its splendor on the dark background of sin and death. Surely we can say with Paul, "where sin abounded, grace did much more abound," "that as sin hath reigned unto death, even so, might grace reign through righteousness unto eternal life by Jesus Christ our Lord" (Romans 5:20-21). This indeed is grace glorified.

God said of His choice of Israel in Isaiah 43:21,

This people have I formed for Myself; they shall show forth My praise.

Now the truth is declared that, concerning us, His choice is made to the end that we might be to the praise of the glory of His grace.

THE PLAN AND THE WORK OF GOD

Ephesians 1:3-14

The Father's Acceptance

Ephesians 1:6

... Wherein He hath made us accepted in the beloved.

With the previous thought in our minds of "the glory of His grace," the literal translation of the above clause is clearer, "with which grace He has graced us in the Son of His Love."

The "Beloved" is the one in the heart of the lover, and Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son, is the Beloved of God. Three times in Matthew's Gospel the Lord Jesus is spoken of as the "Beloved" of the Father, and with each mention these words are added, "in whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17; 12:18; 17:5).

Now this precious thought is made known to us: that we are accepted in the Son of His love, and our lives are "hid with Christ in God" (Colossians 3:3). The love with which God loves the Son is the same love that includes us. In His acceptance of us "in the Beloved," surely, we (see *EPHESIANS*, last page)



Biblical Study Charts

by — Charles Welch (1880-1967)

523 pages, HB
(See [order form](#).)

This is a collection of 418 actual hand-made color teaching charts.

These "wall charts," most of which were originally 3'x5', were designed by Charles Welch to accompany his teaching of the Scriptures. They were preserved and are here presented in color photography on glossy paper, making this an invaluable study resource. All of the charts are believed to have been made before 1953.



Tidbits of Truth #21

“Tidbits” is a column dedicated to short comments, thoughts, studies and excerpts.

Prayer: An Awareness of God’s Sovereignty

I see prayer not as asking God to provide things or change circumstances, but as a constant state of awareness of His sovereignty in ALL THINGS, which then results in an attitude of gratefulness and thanksgiving, which then leads to peace – *i.e.*, gratefulness leads to great fullness.

— André Sneidar

Christ’s Executive in Ruling the Entire Universe

[*Excerpt:*] Only Ephesians gives us the grand truth that it [the One Body] is the complement of Christ with respect to His Celestial place, and will be His executive in ruling the entire Universe (Ephesians 1:22-23). It could not be revealed [prior], for the secret of Christ’s universal headship had not been made known. [The book of] Acts gives Him no sovereignty in Celestial realms. So far as its testimony goes, He has no kingdom until He returns to Earth, and will have none elsewhere.

— A.E. Knoch (1874-1965)
Unsearchable Riches, Volume 18 (1927)

The So-Called Great Commission

[*Excerpt:*] Mark’s Gospel, like Matthew’s and Luke’s, is primarily a Kingdom book, and I am satisfied that none of them contains the church [which is His Body’s] marching orders – not even the so-called “Great Commission” of Matthew 28:18-20. ... This we would call “The Kingdom Commission.” Of course, we are well aware that it is often spoken of as the “Great Commission” of the church, but we are convinced that this is an error. It would be a strange thing to find the church’s commission in the Kingdom Gospel. ... I have long been convinced, and

have taught that the “Great Commission” of Matthew 28:19-20 is primarily applicable to the Kingdom rather than to the church.

— William Pettingill (1886-1950)
Bible Questions Answered (100-112)

Paul’s New Revelation

[*Excerpt:*] That God would save Jews was no mystery; that He would save Gentiles was no mystery. The mystery was that God would put Jews and Gentiles into *one body* and make them fellow members, fellow heirs, and fellow partakers of His promise in Christ. *This was a new revelation* revealed to Paul.

— Paul R. Van Gorder (1921-2009)
Which Gospel When (1967)

Will God Not Do His Very Best?

[*Excerpt:*] Those who believe that God will thus be defeated by many souls, must surely be of those who do not believe He cares enough to do His very best for them. He *is* their Father; He had power to make them out of Himself, separate from Himself, and capable of being one with Him: surely He will somehow save and keep them! Not the power of sin itself can close *all* the channels between creating and created.

— George MacDonald (1824–1905)
“Justice”
Unspoken Sermons

(Originally published in three series in 1867, 1885, and 1889 in London by Longmans, Green & Co.)

Indestructible

You are invincible and indestructible – until the day
(see *TIDBITS*, next page)



Reader's Question Box #64

"The Twelve" and "All the Apostles" and the Salvation of I Corinthians 15:1-4

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

Q: I Corinthians 15:3-11 tells us that Christ was seen by Cephas, then the twelve (:5), seen by 500 at once, then James, then the apostles (:7), and lastly of Paul. Who are "the twelve," for if they are "the apostles," why are "all the apostles" referred to directly later?



Also, the way Paul uses "and that He was seen" in :3, right after :1-2, makes it seem like we must believe this order to be saved too. Is this just extra detail? – D.R.

A: "The Twelve" is a reference to the original unit of 12 apostles chosen by our Lord DURING His earthly ministry. These twelve are those who will sit on Twelve Thrones ruling over the Twelve Tribes of Israel. However, AFTER our Lord's death, burial, resurrection and ascension He appointed ADDITIONAL, supplemental apostles (Ephesians 4:10-11). These are the ones simply referred to as "then of all the apostles" (I Corinthians 15:7).

As for the *salvation* mentioned in I Corinthians 15:2, it is *not* eonian salvation that is referred to in the passage. Context always determines meaning. The word "saved" is haphazardly thrown around as if meant, in and of itself, many things that it doesn't. As with so many areas that are in need of "rightly dividing [or "correctly partitioning"] the Word of Truth," the indiscriminate use of "save," "saved" and "salvation" will lead only to confusion.

Plainly put, not all of the many uses of the words "save," "saved" and "salvation" in Scripture refer to *eonian* sal-

vation. There are countless things that one could be "saved" from. So, when encountering such words in Scripture we must be ever diligent to investigate the context. What one is being "saved" from in I Corinthians 15 is the emptiness (:14, 17) and despair (:19) brought about by bad doctrine – and in this case, it is bad doctrine related to death and resurrection. The Corinthians would not end up in emptiness and despair related to death and resurrection if they simply would "keep in memory" (:2, cf. CV, "retaining") what Paul had taught them and not listen to false teachers.

The believers' *calling* is not contingent on remembering (KJV), holding fast (REB), or retaining (CV) anything! Our calling is not in the least bit up to our actions, let alone our mental capabilities. Our calling is *all* of God – so much so that, even if a believer would become afflicted with dementia or Alzheimer's, or suffer amnesia or brain trauma, for example, they would not somehow cease to be one of the *called*, simply because they could not "keep in memory" or "retain" information that Paul taught. Bad doctrine surely has a detrimental influence on the lives of the *called-out-ones*, but it does not, however, affect their *calling*.

If we are unbelieving, He is remaining faithful – He cannot disown Himself (II Timothy 2:13). **BSN**

TOPICS:

Major: Apostles; Twelve, The; Salvation, The Word
Minor: Calling; Dispensational; Right Division

TIDBITS (continued from previous page)

God kills you. Rest assured, everyone's day of death is perfectly planned and set about by the same Creator who placed you in your mother's womb. Give Him resting praise for this truth!

— Mike Owens

Alone Revealed by Paul

[Excerpt:] Do not regard the church [which is His Body] as the subject of Old Testament Prophecy. [Its] unique origin, heavenly character, and eternal destiny – all in closer association with Christ – is a New Testament mystery, alone revealed by Paul in two of

(see **TIDBITS**, next page)

EPHESIANS (continued from page 7477)

cannot nearer nor dearer be to the heart of the Father than we are “in Christ,” the Son of His love. We are “graced” or “accepted” in the Beloved, and rest near the warm heart of the Father in the person of His only Son.

Near, so very near to God,
Nearer I cannot be;
For in the person of His Son,
I am as near as He.¹

— 1934
(abridged & edited)

1. Catesby Paget (1868-1930).

TIDBITS (continued from previous page)

his prison epistles – Ephesians and Colossians.

— A.C. Gaebelein (1861-1945)
Our Hope
January 1936, page 458

Containers ... and More

[Excerpt:] There is only really One Person in the Universe – God Himself. The creation is the means of manifesting Him. We humans are basically containers, created as persons in His image, to contain and manifest Him as The Person. God is the “All,” and we are merely the means of His Self-manifestation.

We are vessels, and activity is not the function of a vessel. Do we see what this means? Not that we have a life to live with God as our helper. Not that we must pray more, give more, love more, witness more. Not basically that we are God’s partners, or fellows, or co-workers, but that God Himself is the “All” in us. He is the One Who prays, gives, loves, witnesses. He lives our life, our common everyday life.

(to be continued)

Dr. Bennett, an Englishman who came out of the Dutch Reformed Church, was a graduate of Cliff College (Sheffield, England), Moody Bible Institute and McCormick Presbyterian Seminary (Chicago). He was an active Bible conference speaker, the Assistant to the President of Wheaton College, pastor in Muskegon, Michigan a few blocks from Harry Bultema (1884-1952) who was at the Berean Church, and university pastor at John Brown University (Siloam Springs, Arkansas).

TOPICS:

Major: Disruption; Ephesians; God; Jesus Christ
Minor: Acceptance; Calling; Celestials; Ecclesia; Grace; Love; Sovereignty

But, having absorbed and accepted that we are containers, we are more. We are united to Him Whom we contain in a way a vessel can never be united to what it contains. We are also Christ’s Body. A body is solely the agent of its head. In head and body, activity of the members comes to the forefront. A body is made for action. A head is useless without a body, so the Body in Ephesians is specifically spoken of as the *fullness* of the Head – “*the fulness of Him that filleth all in all*” (1:23). Head and Body are necessary to each other.

— Norman P. Grubb (1895-1993)
God Unlimited

BSN

TOPICS:

Major: [Prayer: *An Awareness of God’s Sovereignty*:] Prayer; Sovereignty [Christ’s Executive in Ruling the Entire Universe:] Ephesians; Pleroma; Celestials [Indestructible:] Death; Sovereignty [Paul’s New Revelation:] Right Division [Will God Not Do His Very Best?:] Consummation; Father; Sovereignty [The So-Called Great Commission:] Right Division; Commission, “Great” [Alone Revealed by Paul:] Right Division; Ephesians; Colossians [Containers ... and More:] Pleroma



Divine Lockup

by — Clyde L. Pilkington, Jr.

This work deals scripturally with God’s sovereignty in the midst of humanity’s current condition of, and future deliverance from, unbelief, sin, vanity and corruption. Without question, for all creation, the best is yet to come.

66 pp., PB

See [order form](#) under “Clyde Pilkington.”